

MS # P-041c

Heinz von GYLDENFELD
Generalleutnant

OWI Project

7

Army High Commander and
Adjutant Division

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HISTORICAL DIVISION
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MEMORANDUM FOR: CHIEF, FOREIGN MILITARY STUDIES BRANCH

**SUBJECT : Reviewer's Evaluation of MS # P-041c, "Position of
the German Army High Command Within the Wehrmacht
High Command" by Lt Col Heinz von Gyldenfeldt**

1. Review of MS # P-041c was completed this date.

2. Estimated at about forty-five pages in final type, this manuscript was written by the 1st General Staff Officer in the Adjutant's Office of the C-in-C of the German Army.

The author gives a brief description of the chain of command, the functions of the commander in chief, his relations with other agencies and the daily routine at command headquarters. In sections 16-17 an account is given of the removal of the commander in chief and the assumption of that post by Hitler together with the changes brought about thereby in the organization. Finally, in chapter 18, the author examines the question as to the appropriateness of the original organization and suggests improvements that could have been made.

5. The MS is only one of a series dealing with the German Army High Command. A synopsis of the contents of the entire series, prepared by OCMH, is available as MS # TS 111.

Reproduction of MS # P-041c is therefore not recommended.

**H. HEITMAN
Consultant & Analyst**

The Author

Heinz von GYLDENFELDT

Generalleutnant

Date of birth: 15 August 1899

Place of birth: Bromberg (now under
Polish administration)

Gyldenfeldt joined the army in 1917 and served as a battery officer on the West Front from then on until the end of the war. At the end of that war, he was retained in the service and in 1935 was awarded General Staff Corps status.

When World War II broke out, Gyldenfeldt, who by then had reached the rank of lieutenant colonel, was serving an assignment as operations officer of the 212th Division, in position in the West Wall. His further assignments during the war included terms as a section chief in the Supply and Administration Branch of the Army High Command, Field Headquarters, in France, in 1940, as operations officer of the Ninth Army, also in 1940, as operations officer in the Adjutant's Office of the Commander in Chief of the Army from June 1941 - April 1942, as chief of the German mission attached to the Italian army in Greece, and as chief of staff at army group level. He was promoted colonel in 1942, Generalmajor in 1943 and Generalleutnant in 1944. His final assignment was as chief of staff to Army Group South on the Russian Front.

On 7 May 1945 the general was taken prisoner by US forces in Styria, Austria.

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I.

A. Peacetime Organization

In peacetime the Commander in Chief of the Army was responsible to the Reich War Minister and Commander in Chief of the Wehrmacht. After the removal of Field Marshal von Blomberg in February 1938, Hitler placed himself at the head of the Wehrmacht as "Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht", and abolished the office of a Reich War Minister, so that now the Commander in Chief of the Army was responsible directly to him.

Of equal status with the Commander in Chief of the Army were the commanders in chief of the other branches of the Wehrmacht, namely the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe and the Commander in Chief of the Navy. With the exception of Goering, the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, who was at the same time Reich Minister of Aviation, the commanders in chief of the branches of the armed forces did not have cabinet rank.

In the capacity of Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Hitler availed himself of the Wehrmacht High Command as executive agency, which, during the last years of peace, was headed by General Keitel. Hitler's instructions to the Commander in Chief of the Army thus went through the Wehrmacht High Command, but it must be emphasized that the Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command was not the superior of the Commander in Chief of the Army.

The Commander in Chief of the Army, in turn, was in command of the field forces, namely, the army headquarters, and the corps or military area headquarters with the divisions they controlled.

The Commander in Chief availed himself of the Army High Command as his executive agency. It comprised the following offices:

Army General Staff

Army Personnel Office

General Army Office

Army Ordnance Office

Army Administration Office

Inspectorates of Arms and Services

In addition, the Commander in Chief of the Army had his personal adjutant's office consisting of a very small number of officers whose functions were specifically those of adjutants and who supervised the office routine and maintained office contact with other departments.

B. Wartime Organization

during wartime the administrative duties of the Commander in Chief of the Army had to be simplified since the most important part of his work inevitably lay with the field army, particularly on the operational side. At the same time a responsible, authoritative position had to be established for the home front, as the commander in chief was at field headquarters and hence a long distance from the home army. With the beginning of the war, therefore, the position of Commander of the Replacement Training Army (Befehlshaber des Ersatzheeres) was created for the Zone of the Interior. This officer was simultaneously Chief of Army Equipment. His collective title, therefore, was "Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of the Replacement Training Army". Subordinated to him were the entire replacement training army and those offices charged with the equipment and maintenance of the field army hitherto immediately subordinate to the Army Commander in Chief, namely, the General Army Office, the Army Ordnance Office, the Army Administration Office, and the Inspectors of Arms and Services.

In 1940 it proved necessary to establish a position immediately under the Commander in Chief available for special assignments. This office was headed by a General for Special Assignments. Sections and branches were later added to this office which did not fit into other existing departments, and through which the Army Commander in Chief intended to exercise a personal influence on certain sectors. Of this nature were

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the Special Staff Officer for army propaganda, the Penal Group, for the execution of penalties, and later also the Army Affairs Branch (until 1941 under the operational intelligence branch), for internal affairs, troop special services, and troop discipline.

The field army (army groups and armies) was under the immediate command of the Army Commander in Chief.

II. Responsibilities of the Commander in Chief of the Army

In Germany the final executive power and ultimate responsibility in military matters was rested in the head of the State, up to 2 August 1934 Reich President von Hindenburg, and then, until 1945, Adolf Hitler. Responsibility for specifically military matters was delegated to the branches concerned, the Army, Navy, or Luftwaffe, as subordinate to the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht who was simultaneously Head of State.

According to the service regulations applicable to the Army Commander in Chief, his main duties in peace were the training of the Army, the promotion of discipline and morale, and the maintenance of the Army's readiness for action. In wartime his main responsibility was to conduct the operations of the Army according to directives given by the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.

The Army Commander in Chief was thus allowed a large measure of independence in the fulfillment of his missions. In subsequent chapters it will be examined how this worked out in practice, and the structure of the over-all organization will be examined more closely.

III. The Commander in Chief of the Army and Domestic Policy

The Reichswehr,* later simply referred to as "the Army", was non-political; its personnel was not permitted to take any part in elections.

It is revealing to consider the attitude of the most important commanders in chief toward problems of domestic policy, and then to

* Germany's 100000-man army after World War I

consider also how their military careers ended. General von Seeckt, General Freiherr von Fritsch, and Generalfeldmarschall von Brauchitsch may be regarded as the leaders of the Reichswehr, or Army, in the real sense of the word.

General von Seeckt was the founder and organizer of the Reichswehr. In spite of the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty he contrived to develop the 100,000-man Army was allowed to maintain Germany into an instrument of recognized worth. In particular he raised the small corps of officers, at the time less than 4,000 men, to high intellectual and moral standards. His command fell in a period of political confusion, at least of political unrest. While he himself took considerable interest in politics, it was he who established the theory that the Reichswehr, particularly the officers, should keep away from politics altogether. With few exceptions the non-political officer dates from that period. Seeckt fell as a result of attacks from the left. Purely political issues compelled him to leave.

General Freiherr von Fritsch was of the aristocratic type. His chief merit lay in his training of troops and in his education of officers. Interest in political matters was alien to his nature; he was nothing but a soldier. This attitude was bound to have adverse consequences in the National Socialist period, during which he was Army C-in-C. His active opposition to National Socialism was confined to barring infiltration of National Socialist ideas into the Army and upholding

old traditions such as those relative to questions of honor, family, and church. But he was too unpolitical to defend himself actively against National Socialism, and too much a soldier to revolt against his superior, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, or Head of the State. Thus it is hardly surprising that, following the example set by their Commander in Chief, officers generally also remained nonpolitical. Though most officers were just as much out of sympathy with National Socialism as their Commander in Chief, they remained as reserved and inactive as he. The inevitable result was that National Socialism, meeting no real opposition, and with the activity peculiar to its nature, was able to enter the Army through an ever-increasing number of channels.

Fritsch was deposed by Hitler through base intrigue on 4 February 1938 - again a purely political act.

General von Brauchitsch entered upon no easy heritage on 4 February 1938. In common with other senior officers, he was blamed by large circles of the Army, for not resisting or protesting the removal of the widely esteemed General von Fritsch. But at that time men in the Army were not farsighted enough politically, to understand all that lay behind Hitler's removal of von Fritsch. Being far more interested in politics than his predecessor, Brauchitsch had not failed to recognize what was involved in the fight against National Socialism, but his personal power was not sufficient to enable him to keep its noxious influences out of the Army, and the Army itself, owing to its too rapid expansion and its traditional

political inactivity, did not possess sufficient strength to resist National Socialism.

In addition, von Brauchitsch's term of command falls into a time in which Hitler and National Socialism abandoned all the moderation they initially had imposed upon themselves and began to govern dictatorially and arbitrarily. Since the Army, at the time of the removal of Fritsch, had pocketed so much shame without offering resistance, Hitler could assume that he now could treat it as he pleased. This was bound to weaken Brauchitsch's position right at the start, and only a real fighter could have overcome this handicap, and Brauchitsch was not a real fighter. In 1941 Brauchitsch was dismissed by Hitler because he no longer fitted into his plans - again a political act.

From the foregoing it must be concluded that the Commander in Chief of the Army must be thoroughly conversant in the field of politics so that he may be able to protect his Army from being exploited in the interests of a political party. He must furthermore take care that the Army, particularly the officers, be politically educated, but not along party lines. For this purpose a special organization must be at his disposal, designed to convey his wishes and opinions to the Army.

IV. Relations between the C-in-C of the Army and the Head of State

As already mentioned, the ultimate responsibility in military matters rested with the Head of the State. But the actual handling of these matters was left to the Commanders in Chief of the branches of the Wehrmacht. These branches therefore enjoyed executive freedom

and corresponding responsibility. This principle had in previous times proved completely satisfactory. But in the division of responsibilities between the Army Commander in Chief on the one hand and Hitler, as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, on the other, important changes were introduced from time to time which in the end adversely affected the Army.

During peacetime Hitler kept within his constitutional rights in his relations with the Army, while the Army C-in-C, Brauchitsch, endeavored to keep in line with Hitler's wishes as far as his conscience would allow. In the course of time, however, especially after the beginning of the war in 1939, Hitler began to interfere considerably with the rights of the Army C-in-C. He also employed the Army in an authoritarian manner without regard for counsel or warnings from his military advisers. The Army C-in-C by no means failed to try to oppose Hitler's increasingly phantastic intentions and plans, but fate had ordained that Hitler was to prove right in all decisive issues, at least for the time being. This was the case in regard to the occupation of the Rhineland, the annexation of Austria, the occupation of the Sudetenland, of Memel, and of Bohemia and Moravia. And when the war began, the series of successes continued which Hitler had predicted - the rapid completion of the Polish campaign, the quick victory over France, the occupation of the Balkans - disproving the validity of the restraining and warning voice of the Army C-in-C. These continuous successes of Hitler's - and let us not forget the important Munich Agreement - naturally reduced the prestige and

importance of the Army C-in-C, whose fears had turned out to be without foundation.

In proportion to this strengthening of his position, Hitler's interferences in the operations of the Army increased. More and more he assumed the role of a general and was supported in this role by the fact that the idea for the operational plan of the campaign in France had been partly his.

A few significant examples of interference by Hitler may be mentioned here. During the western campaign Hitler stopped the German forces in front of Dunkerque in order to conserve the German armored units; this enabled the British to pull the bulk of their troops out of France and land them safely in Britain. When the eastern campaign began there were differences of opinion almost from the first day; for the first time a campaign did not proceed according to Hitler's will. He reproached not only the commanders of army groups and armies but especially the Army C-in-C for having made repeated operational mistakes. His interference in the conduct of operations increased as time went on. This difference of opinions became particularly apparent when, after the crossing of the DNEPR line, it had to be decided whether operations should be continued with their point of main effort toward Moscow in order to destroy the mass of the enemy army concentrated in front of the central sector and to gain early possession of the enemy's capital and nerve center of communications. This plan was favored by the military command, that is

to say by the Army C-in-C. Hitler, on the other hand, wanted the points of main effort to be at the flanks directed particularly toward the Ukraine, with its rich production of grains, in order to gain economic advantages there and to establish a base of operations for a push into the oil region of the Caucasus the following year. Again Hitler had his way! And when, finally, in the winter of 1941, it had to be decided whether the front should remain on what was operationally speaking, an extremely unfavorable line in front of Moscow, or moved back to a shorter line in the rear as the Army C-in-C proposed after exhaustive studies and consultations with the commanders at the front, Hitler ordered the line to be held.

These various conflicts were not due to a faulty organization or inadequate service regulations. The reasons were of a purely personal nature. The main reason lay in the fact that the two men, so completely different in character, grew ever more apart from one another. Hitler did not see in Brauchitsch the type of Army C-in-C he desired: a daring, blindly obedient soldier and convinced National Socialist. Brauchitsch, on the other hand, found himself in the course of time filled with ever stronger aversion toward Hitler. Hitler's personality, in its whole brutal, diabolic nature, was the stronger of the two; the Army C-in-C was steadily stripped of more and more of his powers and influence.

In the light of the above it is clearly essential:

1. That the head of a state or the supreme commander of the armed

forces should confine himself to the rights given him by the constitution in his relations with the commander in chief of the army.

2. That the commander in chief of the army should hold a position strong enough to enable him to protect his rights.

Only so will the army be able to prosper in its work. To what extent the conflict which really existed between the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht and the Army Commander in Chief cast its shadows everywhere, remains to be shown through later illustrations.

V. The Commander in Chief of the Army and the Wehrmacht High Command

As Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht, Hitler availed himself of the Wehrmacht High Command as an executive office. This office had originally been kept relatively small. According to the planned method of procedure it was to issue broad directives to the various branches of the Wehrmacht, which directives the branches were to carry out on their own responsibility. This applied particularly in the case of strategic and operational instructions assigning large-scale missions which were then to be carried out by the branch concerned on its own responsibility.

This procedure may be accepted as workable enough if we approve of the organization of the Wehrmacht High Command and Army High Command as it existed at that time. Already in peace time, and even more during the war, this working method changed considerably. Along with its continuous expansion, the Wehrmacht High Command began to issue detailed rather than general instructions to the various branches. This procedure facilitated

compliance with Hitler's wish to conduct operations according to his own ideas. It was the Army that was hit hardest by such measures.

During the course of the war the Wehrmacht High Command began to take over fields of responsibility which had formerly been reserved to the Army High Command. In addition, as the war expanded, certain theaters of war were designated as Wehrmacht High Command theaters; these theaters were controlled directly by the Wehrmacht High Command alone. In the end the Army High Command commanded only the eastern front. For this changed system of control, new departments had to be opened at the Wehrmacht High Command, each of which had functions identical with the functions of the corresponding department in the Army High Command, but for another theater. This resulted in a considerable dualism and a waste of manpower. It also led to confusion as to who was responsible for what. Thus, for instance, in one theater of war the Wehrmacht High Command was in charge of operations, the Army High Command of supply, the Army High Command handled personnel matters, but the Wehrmacht High Command was in charge of propaganda, and so on. For the field forces, even for such command authorities as army groups and armies, this parallelization was disadvantageous. It will be examined in a later chapter how the organization of the Wehrmacht High Command and Army High Command could have been more appropriately arranged.

Here again a brief note on a personality primarily concerned is called for. Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command was General Keitel. He was a proponent of the true Wehrmacht High Command point of view, supporting

the dominance of the Wehrmacht High Command over the Army High Command. It is furthermore known that he was one of those who were willing to put Adolf Hitler's orders into execution, that he shied at offering even the slightest opposition and that he also expected unconditional and unquestioned execution of Hitler's orders from other agencies. From this man the Army C-in-C could expect no support in his endeavor to maintain the traditional independence of the Army nor for his resistance to Hitler's encroachments.

VI. The C-in-C of the Army and the other Branches of the Armed Forces

The Army C-in-C was equal in rank with the commanders in chief of the other two branches of the Wehrmacht. It would have corresponded more closely to the Army's relative importance if he had been "primus inter pares", that is to say, if his position had in some way been raised above that of the other commanders in chief. Failing this it would have been all the more necessary for the Wehrmacht High Command to rule with a firm hand in order to protect the just interests of the Army.

This was especially true for the army's relations with the Luftwaffe, which had evolved from nothing into a separate branch of the armed forces and had combined under its command all air units - whether they were employed for the Army or the operational air force. The Army had no influence whatever on the organization and training of even the reconnaissance air squadrons intended for the Army. Though at the beginning of the war a few reconnaissance squadrons were assigned to

the Army they were actually only "on loan" from the Luftwaffe. This also was stopped later, leaving the Army, entirely dependent upon the Luftwaffe as far as air reconnaissance was concerned. All air combat forces remained completely under the command of the Luftwaffe, so that Army units were obliged to address requests for air support to the nearest Luftwaffe commander to whom the decision was left whether and to what extent the Army's request would be complied with. Since the Luftwaffe commanders, in addition to giving support to the Army, were generally also responsible for participation in operational air warfare, it was up to them to decide which mission was the more important, and very often the Army received second consideration.

It would have been necessary for the Army C-in-C to have his own units for close and long-range air reconnaissance at his constant and sole disposal. These units would have been assigned to the army groups, armies, corps, and divisions, or could have been centered at points of main effort according to the decisions of the Army C-in-C. Likewise, a certain number of air combat units should have been assigned to the Army which at any time might give direct air support without the necessity of a round-about request channel. In regard to the remaining combat units of the Luftwaffe, a rigid control by the Wehrmacht High Command would have been proper which, as a general rule, would have resulted in air support for the Army being given priority.

Conditions with the AAA were even worse. In the 100,000-man Army*

* Authorized by the Treaty of Versailles after World War I

the few AAA batteries then existing all belonged to the Army. But in accordance with the wishes of Hermann Goering and in obedience to Hitler's orders, they were transferred to the Luftwaffe in 1936/37. The Army no longer had any AAA units of its own. Mobilization plans called for the assignment of a number of AAA units to the Army - as was the case in regard to the assignment of flying units - and this plan was indeed carried out. But in the course of the war this arrangement was stopped; the entire AAA was returned to the Luftwaffe and the Army had to borrow the AAA protection it needed. There was a great deal of friction between Army and Luftwaffe headquarters, particularly with regard to the proper employment of AAA units.

The whole procedure was unsound. The Army definitely should have had its own organic AAA units. To secure centralized administration, the development and procurement of material and ammunition could have remained in the hands of the Luftwaffe C-in-C. Aware of the necessity of having its own AAA the Army began to organize its own "Army AAA" during the course of the war, but owing to constant opposition on the part of the Luftwaffe, especially in regard to the distribution of material, it was never able to develop beyond its timid beginnings.

In any case, the experience gained during the war shows clearly that the Army needs its own air reconnaissance squadrons, and so far as possible also its own air combat units. Absolutely indispensable is the incorporation of antiaircraft artillery units into the Army.

Personal collaboration between the Army C-in-C and the Luftwaffe C-in-C hardly existed. Here again the main reason was to be sought in personal motives, especially in the unbridled ambition of Goering, who strove to gather everything into his fold, but at the same time, in order to elevate his Luftwaffe in the eyes of Hitler, missed no opportunity to discredit the Army along with its Commander in Chief.

To maintain liaison with the Army, the Air Force had detached a "General of the Air Force with the Army C-in-C" who was subordinated to the Chief of the Army General Staff. He had tactical control of the Luftwaffe units attached to the Army, and in addition had to advise the Army C-in-C and the Chief of the Army General Staff on the most important matters regarding the Luftwaffe. In return, the Army had detached an Army General to serve with the Air Force C-in-C, keeping him informed of the situation with the Army. The bulk of the coordinating work was done by the two High Commands. Luftwaffe officers were also attached to lower level army commands for liaison purposes.

A similar kind of cooperation - to the extent that such cooperation was necessary - existed between Army and Navy offices through the detachment of liaison agencies. Aside from a few joint operations their points of contact were primarily related to harbor and coastal defense. In this connection there were many differences of opinion relative to respective responsibilities. As between the Commanders in Chief of the Army and Navy, these differences could not be straightened out, nor did the Wehrmacht

High Command succeed in effecting a final clarification of the issues.

VII. The C-in-C of the Army and the Cabinet Ministers

The Army C-in-C did not have cabinet rank although he exercised certain cabinet functions. But inasmuch as there had been no cabinet meetings for several years he was unable, either in peace or war, to make the situation in the Army clear to the cabinet ministers. If this possibility had existed and if the logical deductions could have been drawn from such briefings, many a solution and many a decision, particularly in the sphere of foreign policy, might have been different. Equally important would have been an opportunity for the Army C-in-C to influence the Reich Propaganda Minister or the Minister for Eastern Occupied Areas in official sessions. But as matters stood every cabinet member acted in accordance with his own judgment and the Army C-in-C could only approach the ministries through his various agencies. Whether these ministries acted upon the suggestions made depended more or less upon their good will. But as a matter of fact it was precisely the Minister for Eastern Affairs who through his policies completely thwarted the efforts of the Army C-in-C in those occupied areas. The latter wanted to win the population over to the interests of the Army in particular and of Germany in general; the measures of the Minister for Eastern Affairs ran completely counter to these plans.

In the end, all the Army C-in-C could do was to endeavor to obtain results through personal influence with one or the other cabinet minister,

but since most of them were staunch national socialists and, in addition, knew that the Army C-in-C was not persona grata with the highest quarters, they kept their distance from him.

VIII. The C-in-C of the Army and the SS

Already in peacetime, Himmler had begun to build up his Waffen-SS*, and during the war he availed himself of every opportunity to expand it. More and more SS divisions and SS Corps were established in the course of the war so that, in practice, a fourth branch of the armed forces came into existence.

Admittedly, the Waffen-SS was under the tactical control of the Army, but in all other respects, particularly in regard to disciplinary matters, it maintained its own channels to the Reichsfuehrer SS**, receiving direct orders from him. Since a practice of direct communication between the SS units and the headquarters of the Reichsfuehrer SS, also in tactical matters, developed almost from the start, the Army had practically no authority whatever over the SS. It was patent from the beginning that with his Waffen-SS, Himmler was building up a purely competitive organization with the ultimate objective of supplanting the Army completely. He was no doubt motivated by his personal ambition, seeing in this course of action also the best prospects for himself. The Army C-in-C was completely opposed to the establishment of SS units and fought desperately against Himmler's ever increasing thirst for power. However, his efforts were fruitless, since Hitler approved and supported Himmler's plans and intentions.

* The SS Armed Forces.

** Himmler, as commander in chief of the SS.

The existence of the Waffen-SS parallel with the Army was one of the greatest organisational blunders committed. Into the Waffen-SS were put the best men and, owing to Himmler's connections and the pressure he exerted, the best equipment and materiel. The SS units were always better equipped, clothed, and fed than the Army. But for the most part they were led by incompetent commanders, so that this employment of the best that Germany had in men and materiel was of little advantage. If, in accordance with the wishes of the Army C-in-C the men and materiel had been available to the Army rather than to the Waffen-SS these would have been better employed.

IX. The C-in-C of the Army and the Army General Staff

The Chief of the Army General Staff was the permanent deputy of the Army C-in-C; he was the senior of all department chiefs, who were obliged to keep him informed on all important matters pertaining to their own work. The Chief of the Army General Staff was thus in a position to bring divergent opinions to the attention of the Army C-in-C, with whom decision rested. The Chief of the Army General Staff addressed his requisitions for the field forces to the Chief of Army Equipment, but here again the final executive decision rested with the Army C-in-C.

Even before the war, the position of the Chief of the Army General Staff was no longer what it had been under the elder Moltke, or Schlieffen, for the Army C-in-C was obliged by his station to maintain his position not only over the other department chiefs but also over the Chief of the Army

General Staff. The Army C-in-C alone bore the responsibility. Those duties and responsibilities which formerly had rested with the Chief of the Army General Staff had in large measure passed to him. Although the latter still held the title of "Chief of the Army General Staff" he actually was the chief of staff to the Army C-in-C.

In wartime the Chief of the Army General Staff moved with his headquarters Staff to the field headquarters of the Army High Command, which headquarters was placed under his control. Outwardly, his position was thus raised in importance, but the Army C-in-C was also present at headquarters. In practice, mutual relations remained the same as in peacetime: the army C-in-C retaining full responsibility, while the Chief of the Army General Staff was responsible to him as the immediate chief of his own staff. During the first period of the war the Army C-in-C maintained close and lively contact with the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht relative to operational questions, to whom the Chief of the Army General Staff reported only in exceptional cases. The Chief of the Army Staff was in charge only of the planning and execution of operations but he did not bear the responsibility. In view of this situation, the Chief of the Army General Staff after the Polish campaign suggested that the Army C-in-C himself assume the title of Chief of the Army General Staff, first in order to fall in with public opinion, which traditionally saw an entirely different sort of person in the present Chief of the Army General Staff than he actually was within the existing

organization, and secondly in order to confer this pretentious title upon the person with whom responsibility and decision rested. The suggestion provided for the establishment of the position of "a Quartermaster I" to take the place of the existing Chief of the Army General Staff. But the suggestion was not approved by the Army C-in-C.

The parallelism of the two positions resulted in a practical division of duties. The conduct of operations could lie in the hands of only one person, one in a position to know all that was going on, namely the Chief of the Army General Staff. The Army C-in-C endeavored to avoid all details regarding all operations. The fact that he bore the responsibility constituted an immense relief for the Chief of the Army General Staff; in particular he served as a shock absorber against Hitler, whose interferences in the conduct of operations became increasingly great. Thus two personalities were joined for a common purpose. The Chief of the Army General Staff used the Army as his instrument, the quality of which was the responsibility of the Army C-in-C, who was in charge of equipment, training, personnel affairs, the administration of justice, discipline, and the morale of the troops, and had to maintain the army ready for war. These were his main responsibilities. The main reason why operations went so well during the first years of the war lay precisely in the fact that these missions had been so well fulfilled, that the troops had been so well trained.

Another division of labor developed in the course of time through the fact that the Army C-in-C independently took charge of military

* A reversion to the former use of the term "Generalquartiermeister", whose staff in former times was responsible for central planning for the entire army.

administration in the occupied areas, duties which really devolved on the Quartermaster General and thus fell within the province of the Chief of the Army General Staff. The Army C-in-C kept himself directly informed on these subjects through the Quartermaster General, who made only short orientation reports to the Chief of the Army General Staff. The entire complex of military administration included - particularly in France - the treatment of the population, morale in the occupied areas, executive authority, subjects for which the Army C-in-C showed a particular interest.

Owing to increasingly frequent interference by Hitler, during the campaign in the East, the Army C-in-C, often came into a difficult situation when, while trying to carry out at least one or the other of Hitler's wishes, he generally encountered the solid resistance of the Chief of the Army General Staff and of the commanding generals at the front.

The Army C-in-C and the Chief of the Army General Staff generally met daily, during operations usually several times a day -- frequently with the Chief of the Operations Branch present -- to discuss the situation, make the necessary decisions and agree on the necessary orders, the formulation and execution of which was then the responsibility of the Chief of the Army General Staff with his General Staff divisions. Included in these operational discussions was the enemy situation, that is to say, the activities of the "Foreign Armies Branches".

The Quartermaster General as well as other department chiefs in the

Army General Staff, particularly the Chief of the Organization Branch, generally reported directly to the Army C-in-C, although they were subordinated to the Chief of the Army General Staff, to whom they had to report first. In important questions which in any case called for a decision by the Army C-in-C this decision was made immediately, the Chief of the Army General Staff being only subsequently informed.

X. The C-in-C of the Army and the Commander of the Replacement Training Army

The Chief of Army Equipment and Commander of the Replacement Training Army under instructions from the Army C-in-C, was charged with the training, replacement, and equipment of the Army with respect to personnel, materiel, and financial requirements, as well as with the development, procurement and delivery of weapons, ammunition, and materiel. He was also in charge of the administration of all army departments.

The field of duties was so extensive that the Army C-in-C had to confine himself to giving general, broad, and basic directives, leaving their execution entirely to the initiative of the Commander of the Replacement Training Army.

Unlike the Chief of the General Staff, the Commander of the Replacement Training Army was physically distant from the Army C-in-C, the offices of the Replacement Training Army having remained in Berlin. At times - depending on the location of Army headquarters - the distance was considerable. For this reason alone the Commander of the Replacement Training Army naturally could not very well report more than about once a week to the Army C-in-C,

in urgent cases more often, but at times even less frequently. Often the Commander of the Replacement Training Army brought the department chiefs or officers from his agencies along, to report on their respective fields of duties.

In addition to giving the Commander of the Replacement Training Army general directives regarding his duties, the Army C-1-C primarily had to review and decide upon the requisitions for the field troops which the General Staff was submitting to the Replacement Training Army. These decisions were based on current potentials in manpower and materiel. A large portion of the work of the Commander of the Replacement Training Army was with the Army Ordnance Office. Though this office was subordinated to the Commander of the Replacement Training Army, the Army C-1-C came to exercise considerable direct influence on its activities. According to service regulations, the Chief of the Army Ordnance Office was advisor to the Army C-1-C within the sphere of his duties. He was responsible for the development, procurement, and delivery of weapons, ammunition, and equipment for the Army; new development projects were ordered by the Army C-1-C. Frequently the Army C-1-C went to witness a demonstration of new weapons on the proving grounds of the Army Ordnance Office and made his decisions right on the spot. Unfortunately, his hands were often tied here also, because Hitler -- with his particularly great interest for technical science -- had his own plans, which sometimes strongly deviated

from those of the Army C-1-C. In the course of time Hitler came more and more to reject the work of the Army Ordnance Office; he had a pronounced aversion to "Technical Officers" and preferred to work with civilian agencies and persons.

The Army C-1-C became increasingly concerned with the Army Administration Office as the supply situation in Germany in general and in the army in particular deteriorated. Civilian specialists (such as state secretaries) were often called in to take part in these discussions of supply problems.

With respect to the General Army Office it was the Army C-1-C's responsibility to issue the basic directives regulating the replacements for the Army in personnel, materiel, and finances and for the maintenance of the arms and ammunition supply. All matters concerning recruiting and manpower control were handled by the General Army Office in accordance with direct instructions from the Wehrmacht High Command; in these matters the Army C-1-C was not allowed to exercise any influence.

XI. The C-1-C of the Army and the Army Personnel Office

The Army C-1-C regarded it as one of his foremost duties to insure the high quality of the Army through a proper assignment of personnel to the positions for which they were most suited. Most conscientiously, he devoted much of his time to this task. In talks that lasted hours

with the Chief of the Army Personnel Office, appointments, transfers, decorations, promotions, and the like were discussed minutely. Much time was also taken up with matters of honor and discipline, insofar as these concerned the Personnel Office. Already at that time the SS had begun to address demands to the Army which called for particularly careful decisions.

During the first period of the war it was still possible for the Army C-in-C to exercise his own discretion in personnel matters. Up to that time well-deserving, highly qualified officers of good character came to occupy the responsible command posts. It was only natural, that in accordance with the Army C-in-C's general frame of mind, no particular value was placed upon National Socialist sentiments, and it was precisely this lack of appreciation which in the course of time aroused Hitler's resentment. In addition Hitler had entirely different ideas about a personnel policy. Taking himself as an example, convinced that he had acquired a thorough knowledge of the military profession without ever having studied it, Hitler considered the ideal solution to be to place courageous young men in command positions as early as possible without regard for seniority or years of experience. Only smartness should be taken into account, plus a convinced National Socialist way of thinking. During the period under discussion wishes in this direction with regard to the distribution of appointments began to emanate from Hitler's headquarters. In a few individual cases the Army C-in-C felt constrained to

comply with these wishes, but in general he succeeded in remaining true to his old policy.

After the dismissal of the Army C-in-C, Hitler's ideas were put through in an ever increasing measure, resulting in the rapid but thoroughly unsound promotion policy which was then introduced. This measure in a very short time led to a considerable reduction in the quality of the officer corps, which, so far as the senior grades were concerned, had by the end of the war been considerably watered down.

Hitler felt a special aversion for the General Staff, for it had been the General Staff which had wanted again and again to thwart his intentions and had warned him repeatedly against the execution of his plans. Despite all his successes he had not been able to induce the General Staff to follow him blindly, since the General Staff, long trained to sober and calculating reflection, could see farther ahead, in spite of all the successes of the moment. It saw the possibility of an expansion of the war, it saw the political and especially the economic assets of the enemy, and it believed in its own sober calculations rather than in National Socialistic propaganda. Thus, in the eyes of Hitler, the General Staff officer was almost without exception a defeatist, a member of a last remaining "lodge" to be extirpated; but as yet Hitler needed the General Staff officer for the conduct of his war, knowing that this officer had too strong a sense of responsibility to desert his country in the middle of a war. And as yet the Army C-in-C was also there to regulate the personnel policy of the General Staff in

line with the suggestions of the Chief of the General Staff.

XII. The C-in-C of the Army and the General for Special Assignments

The office of the General for Special Assignments had been established in 1940, under the immediate command of the Army C-in-C, with the object of placing a senior officer at his disposal whom he could entrust with individual tasks from case to case. Such tasks were, among others: the modification of the training program of the Replacement Training Army to meet the requirements and demands of the field army; the inspection of military services within field and home hospital units; the inspection of billets within the area of the field army; the inspection of the personnel and equipment of units newly activated in the Replacement Training Army; the protection of tactical interests in the administration of justice in the field army. For this last task the Legal Group, hitherto attached to the Quartermaster General, was now transferred to the General for Special Assignments.

The activities of the General for Special Assignments largely consisted of inspection tours, concerning which he made personal reports to the Army C-in-C. The Chief of the Legal Group generally reported directly to the Army C-in-C.

Further duties fell to the responsibility of the General for Special Assignments in 1941 with the creation of a Branch for Staff Officers on Special Assignments and a Penal Group (Gruppe Strafvollzug). While the "Penal Group" was concerned with the administration of sentences

imposed within the Army, the chief task of the Branch for Staff Officers on Special Assignments consisted of propaganda for the field army. It had been established on the initiative of the Army C-in-C, and the head of the department had the right to report to the Army C-in-C personally. What the Wehrmacht Propaganda Department did in the Wehrmacht High Command for the whole of the Wehrmacht this department was to do in increased measure specifically for the Army. Since the Army C-in-C was under the impression that the Army constantly fared badly in this respect in comparison with the other branches of the armed forces, particularly the Air Force, he had created, through this Branch for Staff Officers on Special Assignment an office which was in a position to give greater prominence to the Army through propaganda channels such as film, literature and posters.

Later, the Army Affairs Branch, which had been subordinated to the Chief of Operational Intelligence - though his office had nothing to do with this work - was transferred to the department of the General for Special Assignments. However, the chief of this Army Affairs Branch, also had the right to report directly to the Army C-in-C. The Army Affairs Branch had in the course of time become one of the most important departments, especially as it handled all internal political affairs for the field army and was responsible for special service for the troops and all matters concerning discipline. The internal political affairs took up an ever increasing portion of the department's time. Here the numerous

disputes arising out of conflict with the Party, with the SS, sometimes also with the SA or some other organization, had to be investigated and the constantly re-occurring attacks from these sources had to be parried. The Army Affairs Branch had to collaborate closely with the corresponding sections of the General Wehrmacht Office handling internal political affairs, the chief of which office was General der Infanterie Reinecke. Support from that side, however, was very rare.

XIII. Relations of the C-in-C of the Army with the Army

Von Brauchitsch the C-in-C of the Army, was the senior officer in the Army. He had been promoted to Field Marshal after the campaign in the West, along with others who were made field marshals on the same date. This sometimes proved a disadvantage in his dealings with field marshals subordinate to him. It would have been better to raise him above the rank of the other field marshals, of whom there were too many anyhow.

While Brauchitsch was generally considered to be the most adequate person to head the Army, confidence in him occasionally flagged when top-level commanders could not but recognize Hitler's steadily growing influence upon the Army and the Army C-in-C's ever increasing impotence in opposing it. It was customary for the Army C-in-C, particularly during operations, to exchange views frequently by telephone with the commanders of army groups and armies. Generally, it was the latter who approached him to submit requests or express their wishes. This personal exchange of views became less frequent in the course of time, when the commanding

generals at the front realized that the Army C-in-C also was not free to make decisions but must first obtain Hitler's approval, and that this approval was very often withheld. The link between the Army C-in-C and the Commanding generals grew weaker, so that contact with the Army was gradually lost.

As often as possible, the Army C-in-C drove or flew out to his troops. As the theaters of operations expanded this naturally became increasingly difficult. On these occasions he visited the Commanding generals of army groups and armies, particularly those located in crucial areas. In an oral exchange of views the situation was discussed, and almost always the opinions of the Army C-in-C could be brought into agreement with those of the Commanding generals. But unfortunately, when the Army C-in-C returned to his headquarters, Hitler was of a different opinion, and the Army C-in-C was unable to assert himself. Thus, the good relations just established by an oral exchange of views were destroyed.

A typical example was the conference between the Army C-in-C and the Commanding generals of Army Group Center and of several armies at the front at the beginning of winter 1941/42, when it had to be decided whether the front should be held before Moscow or be withdrawn to a more favorable position in the rear. All the participants at the conference were unanimously and decidedly in favor of the latter solution, and the Army C-in-C was likewise convinced of its necessity. But Hitler

disregarded the objections of the Army C-in-C when the question was discussed at his headquarters after the Army C-in-C's return and ordered that the front remain where it was. It was only too natural that the Commanding generals at the front gradually lost confidence in the Army C-in-C through incidents of this sort.

The Army C-in-C was extremely fond of visiting the troops; he had a particularly nice way with them and the troops liked to see him. It was characteristic of him that during the war he used to spend Christmas with some front line units.

XIV. The Adjutant's Office of the Army C-in-C

The Army C-in-C had his Adjutant's Office for the handling of his numerous personal affairs and for the maintenance of office routine and orderly room functions. The personnel consisted of two general staff officers of field grade, two personal adjutants, one officer for special assignments, and, during operations, a general staff officer detached from the Office of the Replacement Training Army.

None of the officers of the Adjutant's Office had any specific fields of responsibilities, all performed nothing but strictly adjutant services. One of the two general staff officers (later referred to as the second staff officer) was in charge of obtaining all the essential data for the conduct of operations for the Army C-in-C and of giving him intermediate briefings on our own and the enemy's situation. Thus the Army C-in-C was informed on the situation early in the morning, before receiving the Chief of General Staff for a discussion of the situation,

which procedure saved time in the discussion. The above General Staff officer also had to obtain for his chief the intelligence reports which were not available through the "Foreign Armies" Department.

The other, called the first General Staff officer, had to carry out missions and wishes of the Army C-in-C, particularly those concerning the collaboration of the various subordinate offices. In addition he sorted the incoming correspondence of the Army C-in-C and in part took care of communications addressed directly to the Army C-in-C, such as petitions and other matters of this nature. Finally, he was responsible to the Army C-in-C for the smooth functioning of office administration.

Of the two personal adjutants one was chiefly in charge of handling official functions while the other one was responsible for the transportation and billeting facilities of his C-in-C, and a residue of old peace time duties, including attention to a hunting lodge. The officer for special assignments was called upon to assist when necessary.

The Adjutant's Office also included a small staff of a few clerks, personal orderlies, and drivers, and a small cavalry section.

The personal life of the Army C-in-C proceeded in the simplest fashion within the circle of this small Adjutant's Office. Only on rare official occasions could the Army C-in-C be seen with a large entourage. Frequently Commanding generals or other officers from the front, temporarily at Army High Command headquarters, were his guests.

XV. The Working Routine of the G-in-C of the Army

The Army C-in-C was in his office from early in the morning till late in the evening. In the morning, immediately upon his appearance at the office, his second staff officer informed him of situation developments since the previous evening. Then the Chief of the Army General Staff appeared for a discussion of the situation. He was accompanied by the Chief of the Operations Branch, the Chief of the Foreign Armies Branch, the Quartermaster General, the Chief of Army Transportation, and, if the occasion demanded, also by the chief of operational intelligence, the chief signal officer and other officers as needed. In this discussion of the situation the decisive developments were reported upon, either by the Chief of the General Staff or the Chief of the Operations Branch; afterwards the other department chiefs reported on matters pertaining to their sphere of work. As far as possible, decisions were made on the spot. Sometimes, the Chief of the Army General Staff stayed behind with the Army C-in-C after the general discussion of the situation to confer with him privately about points not intended for the larger circle.

Thereafter, until the noon break, the other reports from department or section chiefs and from other officers - as described in the preceding chapters - were heard. The presentation of these reports continued after a short noon rest until the evening rest. This reporting followed a schedule fixed on the previous day, on the basis of applications made to the Adjutant's Office by those planning to present reports. Only the

Chief of the Army General Staff was authorized to call upon the Army C-in-C without previous notice at any time. Toward evening the Army C-in-C had the second general staff officer report to him again on changes in the situation. During operations the Chief of the Army General Staff usually came once more after supper with some of his consultants for a further situation report. The time remaining to the Army C-in-C between the various reports hardly sufficed for his own work.

This relatively regular daily schedule was interrupted by the Army C-in-C's visits to Hitler. These took place whenever necessary, sometimes almost every other day, sometimes less frequently. They took place at all times, of the day, and, if for no other reason, alone in consequence of the distance to be traveled, going and coming were rather time consuming.

XVI. The End of the C-in-C of the Army

As we have attempted to show in the preceding chapters the position of the Army C-in-C in relation to Hitler became weaker and weaker. In addition, toward the end of 1941, owing to the great mental strain induced by discord with Hitler, Brauchitsch contracted a severe heart ailment which at times rendered him quite incapable of performing his duties.

Even before this illness, there was no longer any consistent policy in the leadership of the Army, particularly in the conduct of its operations. The differences of opinion between Hitler and the

C-i-C had their effect all the way down to the lowest ranks of the army. Thus, for instance, an operation which had started in a certain direction or in a certain manner in accordance with a decision of the Army C-i-C, would be changed, because Hitler wanted it changed. It was no longer the C-i-C but rather two persons, the Army C-i-C and Hitler, who led the Army in two different directions, and this was bound to shatter the Army.

When the Army C-i-C had somewhat recovered from his illness he came to realize that his retirement would be in the best interests of the Army, first, because he was neither physically nor mentally capable of continuing his command, secondly, in the hope that Hitler would find a commander-in-chief with whom there would not be the same difficulties which were so detrimental to the army.

Thus, shortly before Christmas 1941, he decided, in concurrence with his Chief of the General Staff, to request Hitler to release him. This request was granted in short time.

XVII. Hitler as C-i-C of the Army

Prior to the retirement of the Commander in Chief, no one, not even Brauchitsch himself, had thought of the possibility of Hitler making himself Commander in Chief of the Army. That Hitler did so was a hard blow for the Army. In a private conference with the Chief of the General Staff immediately after Brauchitsch's departure, Hitler said that he considered it his foremost duty as Army C-i-C to educate

the Army in the National Socialist spirit. He knew no army general to whom he could entrust this task; hence he had decided to take command of the Army himself. The Chief of the Army General Staff was to be his immediate subordinate just as he hitherto had been to the Army C-in-C; the remaining functions of the Army High Command were to be exercised by Field Marshal Keitel.

The relations between the Army High Command and the Wehrmacht High Command were fundamentally changed by this new arrangement. The situation unpleasantly resembled the change of conditions at the Wehrmacht High Command at the time Hitler took over command of the Wehrmacht. With one man holding the dual post of Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht and C-in-C of the Army, the Army High Command was no longer able to act as a compact and well-coordinated command authority in protecting the interests of the Army within the Wehrmacht High Command. Conflicts between the Army High Command and the Wehrmacht High Command over spheres of competence which had played an important role up to that time, now lost all significance. To what extent the other controversies of the two agencies could be continued with the old objective depended upon the aggressiveness and ability of the leading personalities within the Army High Command to carry on the fight and upon the opportunity to maintain contact among themselves.

To settle conflicts relative to the conduct of Army operations was now the mission of the Chief of the Army General Staff, who was in

a position to do so through his immediate contacts with the commander and daily report to Hitler. The Chief of the Army Personnel Office and the Commander of the Replacement Training Army were subordinated to Field Marshal Keitel. The conditions under which they could fight for the interests of their departments were substantially less favorable. Keitel would decide whether they were to be admitted for a personal report to Hitler or not. After the new command organization, the Chief of the Army Personnel Office never reached Hitler with a report, the Commander of the Replacement Training Army only once, for a brief interview.

In personnel matters, at least with regard to appointments to command posts, the Chief of the General Staff could state his opinions as the representative of the operational command, but he could not do so where it was most important: he could not touch upon the change-over of the training and promotion system to National Socialist Party methods. In replacement and armament matters, which belonged to the responsibilities of the Commander of the Replacement Training Army, the Chief of the Army General Staff could now present directly to Hitler the demands which he formerly addressed to the Army C-in-C, but to what extent the effect of unsatisfactory decisions upon the Army could be mitigated or averted depended upon the position which the Commander of the Replacement Training Army could attain for himself within the new command organization. Unfortunately he increasingly lost influence.

In addition to the Chief of the Army Personnel Office and the

Commander of the Replacement Training Army, Field Marshal Keitel, in his capacity as Army C-in-C,* also made the General on Special Assignment his subordinate. This move was a heavy blow to the Army Affairs Branch in particular, since the attitude of Field Marshal Keitel precluded further opposition against the SS and other party organizations, as carried on by the Army Affairs Branch, under the old Army C-in-C.

But worst of all was the feeling in the Army that there no longer was a commander in chief whose heart beat for the Army. Hitler had never been a friend of the Army, and he never became one. Everywhere the absence of responsible representation through a commander in chief of the Army made itself felt.

The Army was never to recover from the blow it received when it was deprived of its commander in chief.

XVIII. Was the Office of the C-in-C of the Army appropriately organized?

As the preceding chapters have attempted to show, the office of the Army C-in-C, as it developed in its later years, did not prove altogether satisfactory. The main reason lay in the relations between the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht and the Army C-in-C.

Could these difficulties have been remedied from the beginning?

There were two schools of thought among us. One was satisfied with the organization as it existed at the beginning, with an Army Commander in chief at the top, who, however, should have been allowed an adequate measure of independence.

* Keitel was chief of the Wehrmacht High Command and not C-in-C of the Army, which post was held by Hitler personally.

The other school considered the Army Commander in Chief obsolete, an obstacle to collaboration among the various branches of the Wehrmacht and therefore also an impediment to the strengthening of the relative position of the Army. This school envisaged a commander in chief of the Wehrmacht with a Wehrmacht General Staff at all times headed by a member of the Army, thus giving emphasis to the special interests of the Army. All the operations of the armed forces should be directed by this Wehrmacht General Staff according to a uniform plan -- in conformance with the directives of a Wehrmacht Commander in Chief. All remaining General Staff tasks were to be uniformly directed by the Wehrmacht General Staff, as was already being done in part by the Wehrmacht High Command. The branches of the armed forces were not to be headed by a commander in chief but by inspectors general, who were to be primarily responsible for the training program and the personnel policy, and directly responsible to the Wehrmacht Commander in Chief. In relations with the inspectors general the Chief of the Wehrmacht General Staff was to be "primus inter pares" (first among equals). The Wehrmacht Commander in Chief was not to be simultaneously Head of State. Under the Wehrmacht Commander in Chief with his Wehrmacht General Staff were to be the Theater Commanders. These in turn were to have at their disposal a general staff composed of officers of all the branches of the armed forces, consequently larger in size than had been customary with army groups, for instance, because each of these theater commanders independently and on his own responsibility, would

be completely in charge of his own front, thus largely assuming responsibilities that hitherto had rested with the Wehrmacht High Command or the Army High Command.

Subordinate to the theater commanders were to be the armies of the conventional type and, if necessary, also several army groups. This solution has many points of attraction but would call for a thorough study and careful deliberation prior to its introduction.

/s/ Heinz von Gyldenfeldt